

GSC 696 Master's Thesis Guidelines and Policies

This document summarizes Geology Department expectations and deadlines pertaining to the culminating experience required for a Master of Science degree in Geology. Please consult <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/index.shtml> for general information. **Described below are details that are especially important:**

Thesis Document

- A written document (Master's Thesis) is a very important requirement for the degree of Master of Science in Geology. We suggest you begin writing this as soon as you complete GSC 600 (Use your GSC 600 Thesis Proposal document as a starting point).
- Aim for a total length (body of text plus figures) of approximately 50 pages. This is only a general guideline. Your text must be succinct and specific to your topic. Please avoid redundancies; do not cut and paste superfluous information just to add length to your document. This will infuriate your reviewers!
- The Library has specific requirements on document formatting, including pagination, margins, font size, table of contents, lists of figures and tables, sequence of parts, etc. Read these rules at: <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/formatting.shtml> The Library will defer to Geology Department preferences regarding **style** (reference citations, bibliography format, figure captions and citations, organization and wording of major headings). **Please use the style required by your primary thesis supervisor.** This will likely be a citation style and bibliography format consistent with journals in your discipline, e.g., GSA Bulletin, Geology, Journal of Geophysical Research, Bulletin of SSA, Journal of Environmental Hydrology or Hydrogeology Journal. In all cases, figures with captions must be collated within the body of the text.
- Certain materials like large maps, cross sections or other drawings, long data tables or collections of plots with similar theme should be placed in the Appendices. The Library is able to include large plates as folded documents in envelopes at the back of your thesis. There is also an option of including such appendices, or even movies, on a CD or DVD.
- Be prepared to print out the final version (two copies) on cotton bond paper before submitting to the library for final review.
- The Library requires two formal reviews of your document before submitting for binding. One review should be several weeks before the submission deadline (binding deadline). The final review must be no later than the binding deadline. Appointments must be made well in advance—see contact information at: <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/contacts.shtml>
If you wait until the last day to submit, be ready to stand in line for hours!!

Important Deadlines and Links – also refer to supplemental Table of Deadlines

- Meet with your primary thesis supervisor at least 6 months before your anticipated defense to present a detailed outline and a draft of your Introduction. At this time data analysis will likely be ongoing and you probably won't have all the results, but you should know more or less where your thesis is headed.
- Meet regularly with your thesis supervisor to update your progress and discuss implications of your data and results.
- Set a deadline with your thesis supervisor for submission of the first draft. **This should be a minimum of one month before anticipated defense date.**
- Apply for graduation early during the quarter you intend to graduate. Here are the deadlines: <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/deadlines.shtml>
- Submit the first draft of your thesis to your thesis supervisor **at least one month prior to anticipated defense date.** This must be formatted properly given the guidelines described above. It should also contain the intended figures with figure captions or at least rough drafts of what you plan to include.
- Considering the condition of your first draft (or subsequent revisions), your thesis supervisor will use his/her discretion to schedule your defense date at a mutually agreeable time for your Thesis Committee

members. **Summer thesis defenses are strongly discouraged because it is difficult to assemble three committee members during summer quarter, not to mention the additional fee.**

- Defense date should be a minimum of 10 days prior to the final thesis submission deadline (binding deadline) established by the Library. **This date will not be during the last week of the quarter!**
<https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/deadlines.shtml>
This will allow you time to make corrections and revisions required by your thesis committee.
- Schedule your first review with the Library after you submit your first draft; this should be about 2-3 weeks prior to your scheduled thesis defense.
- Submit the final draft of your thesis to your thesis supervisor for approval. **Leave sufficient time to make corrections required by your supervisor (see next item).**
- Thesis supervisor **must approve your final draft and submit to all Thesis Committee members at least 10 days prior to your scheduled defense date.** Your document should include all illustrations and must be formatted per Library and Geology Department specifications. **This is the document that will be evaluated for a grade.**
- Present your thesis defense on the scheduled date. Obtain signatures of all committee members accept the Thesis Committee Chair immediately after your defense.
- Make final corrections and revisions to your document. **Thesis Committee Chair will sign off only when the thesis is perfected and ready for binding.**
- Fill out **Binding Instructions** form, accessible at https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-affairs/graduate-studies/documents/BindingForm_final_Jan_2012_003.pdf
- Complete the second (final) Library review. This must be no later than the binding deadline. **Schedule an appointment in advance or you will have to wait in a long line.** Bring two copies of the final document, printed on cotton bond paper (at least 25% cotton, 20 pound). Also bring the **Binding Instructions** form and two completed signature pages with original signatures. Library reviewer must sign off no later than the deadline for that quarter's graduation. Obtain a **Binding Payment Voucher** form at this appointment.
- Fill out **Report of Culminating Experience** (RCE) form, accessible at: https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-affairs/graduate-studies/documents/RCEform_Oct.2010.pdf . Obtain more signatures from Thesis Committee Chair, Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair.
- Schedule an appointment with the Graduate Studies Office to submit your thesis and RCE form: <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/contacts.shtml> . Submit the RCE form to Graduate studies office no later than the deadline to clear deficiencies for graduation: <http://www.cpp.edu/~registrar/calendars/index.shtml>
- Submit thesis with binding instructions to Graduate Studies Office. You may submit up to 7 copies, including the two on cotton bond paper required by the Library.
- **Pay Binding Fee** at the Cashier's Office. Below is information on costs: <https://www.cpp.edu/~academic-programs/graduate-studies/project-thesis-guidelines/Fee%20Schedule.shtml>
- Final grade for GSC 696 must be submitted by Thesis Committee Chair (instructor of record) to the registrar by the deadline to clear deficiencies for graduation.
- Wait awhile for processing. Eventually you will receive bound copies of your thesis and a formal Master's Degree certificate.

The Thesis Defense and Associated Grade

- Prepare an oral presentation of your thesis and pertinent results. This should be in Powerpoint format and approximately 30-40 minutes long. Confer with your primary thesis advisor ahead of time.
- Give a formal oral presentation on your scheduled defense date. Friends and family are invited to attend. At least three Thesis Committee members must be present either in person or linked in by remote communication.
- Following the presentation, the floor is open to questions from the audience. The Thesis Committee will hold their questions until later.

- The audience is asked to leave. MS candidate stays to field questions from the Thesis Committee. This will take approximately 30-45 minutes.
- The MS candidate leaves the room while Thesis Committee discusses his/her performance and assigns a grade.
- Grades for GSC 696? The Thesis Committee will assign a **collective grade** based on three components: 1) The final thesis draft submitted ten days prior to defense, 2) The candidate's presentation, and 3) The candidate's response to questions during the defense. Possible letter grades and associated grade points are: A, 4.0; A-, 3.7; B+, 3.3; B, 3.0; B-, 2.7; C+, 2.3; C, 2.0; C-, 1.7; D+, 1.3; or Fail (D or F).

The Thesis Committee Chair (primary thesis advisor) has the authority to raise the final grade up to 2/3 of a grade pending corrections and revisions completed before the final binding deadline.

Remember that a final grade of C is passing; C- or lower is failing. Students need a B average to graduate with the MS, so it would still be possible to graduate with a C on the thesis if cumulative GPA is high enough. Please aim for higher than a C!

University document says that students who fail the comprehensive exam (oral defense) may repeat the process once.

Other Details

- Your Graduate Thesis Committee must be composed of a minimum of three persons. The Committee Chair must be a full-time faculty member in employed at Cal Poly Pomona. One of the committee members may be an adjunct faculty from a different institution or a professional person from industry. Temporary faculty members (Lecturers) from Cal Poly Pomona are also allowed to serve on the Committee
- Geology Department may allow adjunct faculty or industry person to serve as the primary thesis supervisor. However, this person is not allowed to serve as Committee Chair. A full-time Geology faculty member must fill this role.
- The Committee Chair and a minimum of two additional committee members must sign the signature page when the process is complete.
- **The University requires that all graduate students be enrolled in at least one class during the quarter of graduation.** There are no exceptions to this rule. Therefore, most graduate programs have created zero unit 699 classes (ours is called GSC 699—Master's Thesis Continuation) for students who enrolled in thesis units during prior quarters but did not finish in time. If this is the case, be sure to sign up for GSC 699 during your quarter of intended graduation. This will also motivate you to finish the thesis, as the course fee is substantial.